

**General Homer Lea, "How Socialism Failed in China," *Van Norden's Magazine*, September 1908: 107-113.**

Part 1—The Growth and Operation of the Idea

The struggle of mankind for industrial and political freedom does not concern one race nor one age; it is as universal as man himself. Through this never-ending strife man has become what he now is; by no means perfect, nor even nearly approaching that state, but better, nevertheless, because of the struggle. Therefore, when he starts out through new and perhaps dimly-discerned regions to gain his Grail ridicule should not come from the thoughtless nor scorn from those who believe themselves wiser.

To condemn Socialism *à priori* is to disdain human aspiration, which is the cause of all the progress of mankind. To combat Socialism without calm reflection will profit nothing. It must be treated as one of the possible solutions of the economic problem that confronts modern civilization, for if it be the natural outgrowth of past and present economic conditions, its relation to the future is assured. In endeavoring to determine this relationship we may find the answer in a page of the history of China.

A consideration of Socialism, as well as all other activities of man, requires primarily not belief but empirical knowledge. To assent to its formulas means nothing, while they are still purely theoretical, but to know and understand their application is to clear the mind of doubt. Through no other means than human experience is it possible to determine the correctness of Socialist doctrines. Once it is known that Socialism does not belong wholly to the future, in other words, is not wholly theoretical, but has in the past directed the industrial and political activities of a vast portion of the human race, it can be considered with calmness and tranquility of mind as a substantial thing. Only that which has never been tried by man can fill the mind with doubt and apprehension. When, however, the mind is steadied by empirical knowledge, free from prejudice or attachment, it is then possible to determine equitably the worth of Socialism, and its final destiny.

Socialism, in short, is not new. What it still has to give to the human race is not known, but it, as well as many other forms of government, has been tested. Hence, arguments based solely on its future possibilities, whether by its opponents or advocates, are neither reasonable nor just. In affairs of this kind exact knowledge must have more weight than theories. Human experience is better than human hope—and China furnishes the experience with Socialism.

Real Evolution in China

The greatest error extant in the West concerning China is the belief that her system of government has remained unchanged for thousands of years, that it has slumbered on in almost everlasting quietude until the present decade when its heavy eyelids are seen to quiver and its vast being to move slowly, tentatively in the semi-consciousness of its broken sleep. China, like all other nations, has been made up of the cleavage of separate political entities and has been governed in its development by the same laws as have determined the creation and extinction of national existence in the Occident. The evolution of the Chinese people has been similar to that of European

peoples as individuals and as nations, but in China has been done what in Europe has as yet no visible possibility of consummation—the amalgamation of the major portion of Asia into one homogeneous nation. China, in one phase of national life, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was what Europe might have been had Napoleon succeeded in his ambition of universal empire and had formed the whole of Europe into one vast state subject to the same laws, sovereignty, and customs. Changes in government, the working out of political experiments, the extension of industrial freedom, the growth of commercial combinations, the endless struggles to advance the individual and political liberty of a people, represent as many phases in China's evolution as does the development of the whole, rather than any single nation, of Europe or of the entire Occidental race.

### Fifteen Changes of Dynasty

The common Occidental belief concerning the political immobility of the Chinese race is an error originating in a little superficial knowledge and a fundamental ignorance of the Chinese people, and the manner of their political evolution. From the fifth century to the latter part of the seventeenth, China went through fifteen changes of dynasty, each accompanied by wars which would have destroyed such European nations as existed during that period. These revolutions were accompanied by political, constitutional, and industrial changes, and customs, ideals, and nearly every phase of the nation's life from time to time were upset.

Between the same dates there occurred in France only two changes in dynasty, while concurrently a similar paucity is to be noted in the progress of sociological development. Until the founding of the American republic political liberty had not existed in the Occident to the same extent that it had existed in China for many centuries. And until the nineteenth century which marked the beginning of the era of science and mechanical invention in the Occident, China was politically, ethically, and intellectually superior to the West. Since that time conditions have been reversed. The West through the advance of science has accomplished in a few decades a degree of development that China did not succeed in attaining during her ten centuries. But in all those inner, finer phases of individual and national life which are still unaffected by science and invention, China has reached a plane of development toward which the West has yet to struggle.

Unfortunately the vast treasure of empirical knowledge which China could give to the world concerning man and his objective and subjective evolution, is not appreciated, in fact, almost wholly unknown in the West. China is not the land so many writers and travelers have represented it to be; it is neither a realm of reveries, nor a dim domain where are to be found the shadowy illusions and delusions conjured up by the western imagination. China, instead of being a phantasmagoria of strange beings, of bizarre contradictions in life and ideals, is in all its essential characteristics identical with the Occident; it is moved by the same hates, the same hopes, the same fears, the same delusions, the same individual and economic struggles, as the peoples of the West, but, being a little older, is wiser in many ways.

### Socialism Not a Modern Product

The Chinese nation in its many centuries of political evolution has traversed regions yet unknown to the West and has established institutions and forms of government that in the Occident are considered as theories and quite Utopian. A consideration of Socialism, for example, in China, while taking up only one phase of the economic evolution of the Chinese people, shows, nevertheless, how completely that nation has been led by the hand of the same laws of progress, of which man is cognizant only in the aggregate, and which are not limited to time nor place nor tribe.

That Socialism is not the product of modern Occidental evolution only is proved by the fact that it was put into effect in China in the eleventh century, and no doubt were we to know as much of the details of Egypt the old, as we do of China, we would find in that dark land of mystery the same or a very similar phase of economic progress. While nine centuries now separate Chinese from American Socialism, yet they are identical in their essential principles. In fact, as evidence that they are essentially alike, we find that a comparison of the causes, propaganda, and principles of the two eras of Socialist development shows practically no differences. That the Socialist idea has not yet become an economic fact in the West makes it impossible to complete the comparison and determine whether the Chinese conception of Socialism was the same as ours will be.

### Records of Ancient Speeches

Owing to the fullness of Chinese historical writings, not only has a complete record of the physical facts of that period been preserved, but we have also the polemics for and against Socialism, and the speeches of its leaders and opponents. The records of the early political contests of the American republic are not more trustworthy than are the documents of that time of China.

If political entities are governed in their development by universal law, like conditions in both the Orient and Occident, whether in the eleventh century or the twentieth, should produce like results. If Socialism, as it developed and finally existed in China nine hundred years ago, was the same as now agitates the minds of men in Europe and the United States, conditions that were then and are now productive of Socialism, must be identical. The beginning of Socialism in China occurred simultaneously with the conquest of England by William the Conqueror, a comparison of the civilizations of which two countries shows the degree of difference in not only their evolution but also that of both the Occident and the Orient.

The population of China in the eleventh century, at the beginning of the Socialist era probably exceeded the entire Occident. In agriculture alone there were engaged twenty-two million men. Over the whole empire spread a vast network of broad highways paved with granite slabs and bordered on either side by elms or banians; more than seven thousand miles of canals lined with stone and bordered by double rows of willows and elms connected, in a perfect system, all the great rivers; so that the means of transportation exceeded anything in the world before the present railroad system of the United States came into being.

The state of peace, harmony, and contentment prevailing at that time in China was such that crimes of any kind were in negligible number. Every possible precaution was taken to preserve national and individual morality and to guard the interests of the people. Personal liberty was almost perfectly protected, more thoroughly than it has ever been in

the Occident. Restrictions were placed even on the judiciary, that its powers might not be used to curtail the rights and liberties of the people. Emperor Tai tsou, in taking away from the provincial governors the power of life and death, said: "As life is the dearest thing man possesses, it should not be placed at the disposal of an official often unjust or wicked."

### Individual Liberty Increased

In this wonderful manner and in still other ways, the liberty of the individual was increased to an extent unknown in the West today. During this period the entire government was subordinated to the natural rights of mankind, and "the greatest good of the greatest number" constituted the chief aim of its being. The emperor permitted the meanest of his subjects to approach him at all times. The gates and portals of his palace were left open day and night to show the people that his court resembled his heart. During this era there were Ten Commandments governing the emperor's conduct, which were made to apply equally to lesser government executives:

- Fear Heaven.
- Love the People.
- Work to make yourself perfect.
- Apply yourself to the sciences.
- Raise wise men for public service.
- Listen to advice which is offered you.
- Diminish taxation.
- Moderate the vigor of the law.
- Avoid pomp.
- Fly from debauchery.

The system of government during this epoch was an imperial democracy, a form of government unknown outside of China. It was divided into two distinct though correlative forms; and while they were identical as regards their effect upon the rights of the individual, the selection of officials in one case came from universal suffrage, in the other by competitive examination. The heads of communes, towns, and villages were elected by the votes of the entire populace. Every man was eligible to vote and to hold office in his own district. The oldest and most honored men of each commune were usually elected to these positions. The officials of the other class, up to the prime minister, reached their respective grades through the selective process of competitive examination. These examinations consisted of four grades and were open to every man in the empire, no matter how humble his origin. It was immaterial whether he came from a palace or from a fisherman's hut on the marshes of the Tung-hu; whether he were a prince of royal blood or the son of a charcoal burner in the gloomy thickets of the Sin Ling Mountains.

China was at that time, and is now, divided politically into what corresponds to states, counties, and boroughs or districts. Those who passed the annual examinations in the minor political departments were permitted once a year to go to the state capital and take examinations for the bachelor's degree. To those who were successful permission

was given to stand for the master's degree at examinations held triennially at the capitals of every state. Those who again passed were allowed to go to the capital of the empire and stand for the doctor's degree. If they were finally successful the emperor examined them in person. From the wisest men were selected the highest ministers; from the next grade of intelligence were selected officials for corresponding positions; and so on down the grade, the only exception being in the communes where the electoral method prevailed. Rank in the army and navy was also determined by competitive examinations.

### A Democracy Led by Scholars

China was at this time a democracy largely under the leadership of scholars, founded on universal suffrage, united and held together by the outward form of imperial authority. For twenty-two centuries prior to this era, the nation had been ruled by an oligarchy of scholars, but during the Sung dynasty, which now concerns us, the national evolution produced a democracy to which the Occident is yet to attain—complete political and personal liberty.

It will at once be recognized that this system of government could not have existed a single decade without a correspondingly extensive system of public education. In consequence, every village possessed its public school or schools provided with duly qualified teachers by the government. Each *Hsien* or district had a high school for the graduates of the elementary grades; each *Chau* or sub-county had its academy for the graduates of the *Hsien* high schools; each *Fu* or county had a college for those who had completed their studies in the *Chau* academies; and finally each state had a university where college graduates completed their studies. These means of education were free to all and the entire expense was borne by the government. To further augment the opportunities of the people to acquire an education and have equal rights and opportunities to gain the highest honors in the empire, public libraries were established even in the most remote hamlets. In addition, the government engaged learned men to travel from place to place delivering lectures to all the people.

### Oratory Specially Encouraged

Oratory was especially cultivated and the government awarded honors for special oratorical excellence. In due time, the whole empire resounded with debates. The heavens re-echoed with arguments and the winds were laden with words. It seemed as though the high culture to which the whole Chinese people had elevated itself turned toward discussion and polemics.

Socialism now made its appearance. It came as the immediate outgrowth of an apparent general recognition that it was the simplest "means to an end." Time proved, however, that the people were not even then quite ready for it.

It is evident that the worth of any comparison between two periods of political developments, differing chronologically and racially, depends primarily upon the similarity of sociological conditions productive of homogeneity in political evolution. While space has permitted only a brief resume of the social and political conditions that made Socialism possible in China, the reader, by further consideration, will be startled by this fact, that in the whole recorded history of mankind there are only two periods in

which human society has been so constituted that Socialism could follow as the natural outgrowth of that which went before—during the Sung dynasty of China and today in the United States and Europe. The liberty of the individual in China, the solicitude of the state for his welfare, the universal equality of man, his equal rights to education and political preferment, have never been anywhere nearly approached in any nation, ancient or modern, except in the United States.

### Socialism an Evolutionary Phase

Socialism entered our politics at that period of Western economic evolution corresponding exactly to its introduction into the Chinese nation. Hence, Socialism cannot be considered as the erratic phantasm of unbalanced minds, nor as the delusion of brain-sick men; but is, on the other hand, a phase in the evolution of human society governed by those inexorable laws which are cognizant of man only as man is a part of nature. Some form of the present Socialist idea in due time will become supreme in the United States, as it did in China nine centuries ago, unless unforeseen political changes, intervene. To deny the idea, to evade and ridicule it, will in the end prove of no avail. Socialism is the product, not of man, but of a definite political condition and development.

Forms of government in China, as elsewhere, have never been constant, rigid, or changeless, but have conformed to the general lines of the evolution of mankind, socially and politically. Government has been and is after all, but the expression of the nation's composite mind. When the development and constitution of Chinese economic conditions made Socialism possible and the public mind demanded it—whether the people fully comprehended it or not is beside the question—the government was taken into the keeping of the new political idea.

We now pass to the consideration of Chinese Socialism *per se*, as compared with that now advocated in the United States, showing that, inasmuch as the conditions producing it in China correspond to the conditions which are producing it in this republic and in Europe, so were all its basic principles identical. In this comparison between American Socialism of the twentieth century and Chinese Socialism of the eleventh century, we will briefly compare the latter's tactics, principles, and arguments with the modern Socialist tactics and its platform adopted at Chicago this year.

### Chinese Socialists Had a Leader

One and only one fundamental difference between the tactics of the two eras is apparent; in all other essentials the same lines are followed. The modern Socialist movement has no leaders; the Chinese had one—a man splendidly equipped and admirably situated, as regards his connection with the government, for the leadership. The modern party shows wisdom in refusing to tolerate a leader—yet; for no matter how loyal or well-qualified he may be, yet he may wreck the cause. A zealot is to be feared more than a traitor—in his zeal he may carry the principles into operation far beyond the full comprehension of the great mass of the people, who failing to understand cannot adjust themselves to the new conditions. The Socialist government, which Wang An Chi, the

Chinese leader, built was in advance of the people; he thought about a peaceful revolution, not, as should have been his tactics, a slow, natural evolution.

Wang An Chi was one of the greatest scholars and most intellectual men of his time. Endowed by nature with a brilliant mind, he perfected it by endless study and application. He was a great orator and had the power, like some American orators of the present time, of giving the weight of wisdom to the most trifling thoughts. His private life was above reproach. He was extremely dogmatic, and once he advanced an opinion, he never deserted it. No one could exceed him in zeal, and he was unequalled in his capacity for vast labors, such as, for example, in addition to his public work, his commentaries on all the classical writings, on each of which he wrote extensive opinions and interpretations, and an universal dictionary which he compiled, giving to certain words such arbitrary meanings as suited his great purpose.

Under the first emperor of the Sung dynasty, whom he served, he had unlimited power, yet he only perfected the then idea of government and made no attempt to revolutionize the nation. But during this time the principles of Socialism were spreading over the entire country. Discussions, debates, and assemblies occupied the time of the people almost continuously, as in this republic during a presidential campaign. Education and individual liberty being universal, while oratory had become the accomplishment of all, it is said that “the very fields, the mountain sides, the rivers and seas, wherever man dwelt and the shadows of heaven fell, there, mankind harangued and debated.” The entire nation was divided into two contending parties. In addition to oratory and public debate, placards were everywhere posted in prominent places, millions of pamphlets, satirical, judicial, inflammatory, just, or libelous were scattered over the country.

The Declaration of Principles, as adopted by the Chicago Socialist Convention, states: “Human life depends upon food, clothing, and shelter. Only when these are assured are freedom, culture, and higher human development possible.”

In the enunciation of this selfsame principle, the Chinese Socialists said: “The most important duty of a government is to manifest the utmost solicitude for the welfare of the common people, and to procure for them the means of livelihood, plenty, and happiness.”

### Chinese vs. Modern Socialism

The Chicago platform states: “The wage workers are therefore, the most determined and irreconcilable antagonists of the ruling class. They are, also, the class which suffers most from the curse of class rule. The fact that a small number of capitalists is permitted to use all the country’s resources and social tools for their individual profit and to make the production of the necessities of our lives the object of their competitive private enterprises and speculations, is at the bottom of all the social evils of our time. . . .

“The private ownership of the land and means of production used for exploitation is the rock upon which class rule is built; political government is its indispensable instrument. The wage-workers cannot be freed from exploitation without conquering the political power and substituting collective ownership for private ownership of the land and the means of production used for exploitation.”

The Chinese Socialists said: “In order completely, to equalize all classes and to prevent the oppression of man by man, the government should take possession of all the resources of the nation and should become the sole proprietor and employer. The government should assume entire control of agriculture, commerce, and all industries. It should use every means to succor the working classes and prevent the rich from grinding them into the dust.”

In order to bring about this condition of equality two things were necessary— to strip the rich of their wealth and to make the state the owner of all resources and means of production. The Chinese accomplished both of these tasks.

The equalization of wealth was brought about by exempting the poor from paying taxes and by levying upon the rich for a term of years according to their wealth. Tribunals were appointed to determine who was rich and who poor. The money thus collected, when exceeding the ordinary expenditures of the government, was distributed to aged paupers, to workingmen out of employment, and to the extension of public works. At the same time, the government took possession of all natural resources and means of production. Nearly the entire nation, greater in population than the whole of Europe, had by this time become Socialists. Only those who belonged to the capitalist class and a portion of the literati still opposed it.

“By these means,” said the Chinese Socialists in speaking of the state taking possession of the nation’s wealth, “all of mankind will have an abundance, and happiness will reign throughout the land. The only persons who can possibly suffer by this change are capitalists and monopolists who never fail even to profit by famines and all kinds of misfortunes that may fall upon the people. They stop at nothing to enrich themselves and bring ruin upon the working classes.”

### Enemies of the Common People

“Who can say that it will be great harm to put an end to the greed of these enemies of the common people? Does not justice require that they shall be forced to restore the wealth they have extorted from the people? The state watching over the industries and agriculture will fix the price of commodities, and there will always be a supply proportionate to the demand. In case of famine in any one province, the great Agricultural Tribunal at Peking, informed by the Provincial Tribunals of the condition of the various harvests of the nation, will easily restore the equilibrium by causing the superfluity of the fertile provinces to be transported into those where the people are in need. Thus, the necessaries of life, being controlled by the state, will always be sold at a moderate price. There will no longer be poverty, nor any classes in want, while the state, being the only speculator, will realize enormous profits annually, which are to be applied to works of public utility.”

The Chicago platform, in speaking of the same thing, says: “So long as a small number of individuals are permitted to use the common resources of the nation’s wealth for their private profit in competition with each other and for the exploitation of their fellowmen, industrial depressions are bound to occur at certain intervals.”

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## Part 2—Socialism in Actual Control and Its End

In their relationship to modern Socialist doctrines, two important characteristics of ancient Chinese Socialism have been noted: i.e., the identical character of the purpose and propaganda of the two Socialist eras; the same economic conditions gave birth and expression to both. Two conditions are yet to be considered: Socialism in actual control over a vast portion of mankind and its evolution, and its end.

As Socialism in the Occident has not yet reached the point of passing from theory to practice, we can consider these two latter phases only in their relationship to the Chinese economic structure. By such empirical knowledge, however, it may be possible to make reasonable deductions as regards the future of modern Socialism.

It is not always just nor sensible to reason and make deductions from analogy alone, but when we are dealing with mankind, his hopes and his hates, the hungers that move him to action or the satiety that makes him opposed to change or progress, we are dealing with more or less constant factors, factors that have been altered so imperceptibly that the records of man's efforts for progress in modern times differ only in names and local color from the records of former ages. In this instance, we find that Chinese sociological and ethical conditions of the eleventh century were so similar to our modern problems that they were productive of the same social and political evolution as is evidencing now; that they produced, nine centuries separated, the same doctrines of Socialism as we have today. In this we have a wonderful illustration of the universality of natural law governing mankind, equally and impartially, in every phase of his evolution, whether in the Orient, Occident, in ancient or in modern times. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to believe that in the consummation of Chinese Socialism is to be found a prophecy and a warning for modern Socialism.

The practical demonstration of Socialism in China was not momentary, but it continued in force for a number of decades. It was not tentative, but was supreme. It was not rigid, but, on the other hand, changed the rigidity of theory to practical flexibility to meet the daily stress. Not only that, but Wang An Chi—who invariably held himself above the prejudices and foibles of mankind—and his associates and those people who saw the pitfalls ahead, made every effort to prevent Socialism from escaping the bounds of reason or practical uses. They foresaw and feared the possibility that the people might not readjust themselves to the new economics.

In studying these radical changes in the government and social organism of China, one must realize that they involved not only a nation twice as large as the American republic, but one in which education and individual liberty were far more highly developed. The rich were reduced to the economic level of the poor; the natural resources of the nation were taken over by the state as well as all means of production; competition was eliminated; every natural increment of wealth was devoted to works of public utility. Man no longer exploited the natural resources of the nation nor his fellowmen. Capitalists no longer existed, nor incentive to become such. Commercial combinations were no longer possible, since men could not unite in competition with the government to develop, exploit, transport, or sell.

The people having placed the initiative in the hands of the state, withdrew from every form of competitive strife. Their old incentives they set aside and began to take up new ambitions.

Tribunals were appointed by the state —tribunals to determine who were rich and who were poor, who should be deprived of their possessions and who should be aided by the state; tribunals to fix the occupation of men according to their fitness and determine the remuneration; tribunals to control commerce to its last detail, and to carry on the innumerable industries of the nation.

### Collective Farming

The state, or rather the people through the state, being the only proprietor of the soil and the sole employer of labor, divided the country into districts and appointed tribunals to assign land annually to farmers; to assign them seed or stock or cocoons, together with farming tools and means of hauling the produce. In order that all the land should be profitably cultivated, the tribunals determined what kind of crop should be grown.

Never in the history of mankind was there consummated such a radical change in the government of a nation as was brought about by the supremacy of Socialism in China. Ordinarily, where there have been revolutionary changes they have endured for but a short period of time: in fact, many important social and political revolutions have been so tentative that not even the memory of them now remains to mankind. There was, however, nothing tentative nor temporal in this readjustment of China. Wang An Chi maintained his supremacy and power through the reigns of several emperors and he revolutionized political and social conditions to the same degree possible if the vast majority of the citizens of the United States were in favor of Socialism, and Socialist leaders were given absolute power to readjust the affairs of the republic to their ideals.

As there were about twenty-two million men engaged solely in agriculture at that time, the importance of the farmer in the nation was very great; and the principal argument used by the opponents of Socialism was directed toward this class of producers. I will, therefore, draw from this anti-Socialist propaganda, as it involves the least intricate phase of China's industrial life and is more readily understood, inasmuch as agriculture is an occupation common to all peoples.

The leading opponent of Socialism was Sse Ma Kwang, one of the most noted historians and statesmen of China. From the beginning of Socialism to his death, he was its most relentless and consistent opponent. The thorough way in which Socialism seized upon the nation is evidenced by the fact that Sse Ma Kwang and the entire conservative element—once all-powerful—were overwhelmed in this popular flood of aspiration for human equality. Sse Ma Kwang was intellectually the equal of Wang An Chi, and equally fervent. Each was perfectly sincere in his belief that his particular system of government alone could preserve the country and the rights and liberties of the people, and at the same time would move the nation on to increased greatness and the people to higher planes of development.

I have previously shown the state of civilization China was in just prior to the time of the advent of Socialism and the degree to which popular freedom had extended under that system. Sse Ma Kwang was the champion of the conservative form of

statehood and the relentless foe of the spirit of radicalism. Wang An Chi was a radical who feared no obstacle and respected no ancient institution. He was one of those rare individuals who could and did free himself from contemporary prejudices and attachments. Sse Ma Kwang, on the other hand, revered the virtues and customs of antiquity, believing fantastically that the development human society depended upon the past and was so evolved by nature that decrees by man could not hasten that which was destined to go slow, nor retard that which nature had determined should proceed rapidly.

Wang An Chi, in his advocacy of Socialism, had to exercise every resource of his imagination, the wonderful brilliancy and activity of his mind, and his relentless tenacity of purpose. He went straight to work and tore down the social and political edifices of the past, and at the same time began to rebuild and to regenerate. Sse Ma Kwang, on the other hand, was the genius of the past, the preserver of established conditions, and in his opposition to Socialism he dilated extensively on every little good of the present as the result of the past, and sentimentally dwelt upon the examples of the ancients and upon the lessons of history.

### The Reactionary Argument

Sse Ma Kwang's efforts against Socialist theory were without result, as Wang An Chi had not only the government in his hands, but the people supported him almost unanimously. I will quote from Sse Ma Kwang's arguments against Socialist control of agriculture and the advancing of seed to the tiller of the soil:

"It is proposed further," continued Sse Ma Kwang, in his analysis of Socialism while it was still a theory, "to advance the farmers seed with which they are to sow the ground. At the end of winter or in the beginning of spring officers of the Agricultural Tribunal will supply gratuitously each man with the quantity it judges necessary. As soon as the harvest is gathered, the same quantity and no more will be demanded back. What can be more advantageous to the people? By this means all the lands will be cultivated and abundance will reign throughout the provinces of the nation.

"In theory nothing can be more attractive and beneficial, in practice nothing more injurious to the country. We will suppose the seed distributed and eagerly received by the people (though on this point I have much doubt), do they really make the use of it for which it is destined? Whoever believes this must have very little experience, and judges far too favorably of the common order of men. The interest of the moment is what concerns men most. The greater part of mankind never look beyond the day, and very few trouble themselves about the future.

"The seed, when once entrusted to them, they immediately begin to dispose of; they sell or barter it for something they need more than anything else. Grain having been given them, they leave off work and become idle. But suppose that all this does not happen; the grain is sown, all the labors necessary to cultivation are properly performed, the time of gathering the crop arrives and they are called upon to repay what was loaned them by the state many months prior. The harvest, which they had watched as it grew and ripened, and looked upon as their own property, the well-earned fruit of their labors, must now be divided. Part must now be yielded up or sometimes, in bad seasons, the whole crop. How many reasons will be alleged for refusing to do so! How many real and

imaginary necessities will stand in the way of an equitable repayment to the public exchequer!

“The tribunals, we shall be answered, which are established expressly for this department will despatch their deputies to enforce payments due the state. Beneath the pretext of demanding the share of the state, what extortion, what robbery, and violence will be committed! I do not mention the enormous cost which such establishments would entail. But, after all, at whose expense would they be maintained? At the expense of the government, the nation, or the farmers? Whichever it may be, who will derive advantage from it? It may be alleged that this practice of advancing seed has long been in use in Shensi and that none of these evils has taken place and that it appears, on the contrary, that the people found it desirable, since they made no request for its repeal. I have but one reply to make to this. I am a native of Shensi. I passed the first part of my life there, and I have been an eye witness to the miseries of the people. I can affirm that, of the evils under which they suffer, they attribute two-thirds to this practice, against which they murmur unceasingly. Let candid inquiry be entered into and the true state of conditions will be made manifest.”

In midst of such clamor of his adversaries as this and the increasing violence of their attacks, Wang An Chi remained calm and imperturbable. The time came, however, when Socialism, though in operation, had to be defended.

“Why be hasty in your condemnation of Socialism?\*” he said (\*This is an arbitrary translation of the ancient Chinese word signifying the then social condition, into the modern English term.—Ed.). “Wait until experience has shown the result of the measures we have adopted for the benefit of the realm and for the happiness of the people. Beginnings are always difficult, and it is only after overcoming many obstacles that a man can hope to reap the fruit of his labor. Be firm and all will go well. Ministers, nobles, officials, have all risen against me. I am not surprised, for they cannot quit the common routine and adopt new customs. Little by little they will grow used to these innovations; this natural aversion will die away of its own accord and they will end by applauding what they are now so eager to decry.”

Yet Socialism failed.

It had owed its long ascendancy to the support of the people. By these same people it was destroyed. Each decade the nation became more deeply plunged into misery; yet with that patience characteristic of the Chinese the people continued to endure in hopes, as Wang An Chi said, that in due time all would go well. The reason was obviously that the people were utterly unable to readjust themselves to the new conditions. The government had been revolutionized, but not the people. So the government had to seek its level at the level of the people.

Wang An Chi eventually was supplanted by his bitterest opponent. Sse Ma Kwang, who effaced every vestige of Socialism and restored the government of the nation to the condition that existed prior to its introduction. These two great leaders died within a short while of each other, and their memories were, from time to time thereafter, praised and execrated with all the violence and bitterness of political strife.

The death of Sse Ma Kwang showed how public opinion had changed. Several decades before the people were Socialistic. Now, when the body of this reactionary was borne to its tomb, the entire people voluntarily went into mourning.

## The Reason for the Failure

The failure of Socialism was not due to any imperfection in the execution of its tenets, but resulted from the failure to reconstruct the nature of man by revolution—as against slower moving evolution—so as to conform to its ideals. To conceive Socialism and bring it to pass was an enormous task, a labor worthy of centuries, but this of China was the forced growth of a few decades. That upon which depended the success of Socialism Wang An Chi and his followers could not accomplish—the changing of man’s nature to conform to its principles as quickly as they had hoped. The people were not ready.

The success of Socialism depended upon the Chinese people becoming a perfect machine. That they were governed by the same motives as before its advent presaged failure. The quick transition was more than they could grasp. Though in practical use Socialism always remained to them a theory, highly desirable, but still a theory. The most enthusiastic Socialist of today will admit that to put his theory into practice at once would do incalculable harm, inasmuch as man has not yet awakened his civic consciousness. The incalculable harm came to China; it was the impoverishment of the nation that brought about the destruction of Socialism.

Considering the fact that the Chinese were so highly developed at that time as compared with today, it would have been difficult to believe in the failure of Socialism, had it always remained a theory. In this instance its failure demonstrated the impossibility of circumventing or short-cutting that inexorable law which not only governed the development of the Chinese people as individuals and as a people, ethically and politically, but also governs individuals and nations today—the law of evolution.

“How few are the features of man!” remarks a Chinese philosopher. “Only four or five, yet amongst all the myriads upon earth we find no two who are alike. How few are the primordial passions that move mankind! Only four or five, yet there are not to be found amongst the tribes of men two who are alike in their hates and desires.”

It was impossible to fuse those complex human motives and passions into one homogeneous desire in so short a space of time. While laws could be enacted that might restrain many of the selfish human motives and passions—even enact them out of being—no laws could supply others to take their place. In circumscribing all human effort by laws and by suddenly eliminating the old incentive for ambition, thrift and possession, the Socialists brought stagnation to the entire nation. The people could not understand a higher incentive. And out of this stagnation came national impoverishment; out of this state-imposed poverty came popular reaction, which resulted in the destruction of Socialism.

Confucius, sixteen hundred years before, expressed clearly conditions necessary to the success of Socialism:

“It is because men are prone to be partial toward those they love, unjust toward those they hate, servile toward those above them, arrogant toward those below them, and either harsh or over-indulgent to those in poverty and distress, that it is difficult to find any one capable of exercising sound judgment with respect to the qualities of others.”

The effects of Socialism upon the Chinese nation were not confined to the discontent of the people and the national impoverishment, but culminated in the destruction and conquest of the nation. The ascendancy of Socialism brought about the

concurrent deterioration of the former military spirit, followed by a complete disintegration of the army and navy. The maintenance of armed forces with gradations of rank was incompatible with Socialist ideals.

Toward the end of the eleventh century the northern part of the nation began to be overrun by Manchu horsemen, and it was impossible for the Chinese under their Socialistic government to offer any practical resistance. By 1115 A.D., the Manchus had conquered the northern part of China and had established the dynasty of Kin. Later the Chinese by treaty ceded to the Manchus the whole of China north of the Yang-tze, except the province of Sz-chuen and four departments in Shensi.

With the final overthrow of Socialism, in 1129, the nation returned to the form of government existing prior to the ascendancy of Socialism, but it was never able to revive the militant spirit nor create efficient armies. As they lost the northern portion of China to the Manchus, so were they to witness in the following century the complete desolation of China by the Tartar herdsmen of Gobi. For the first time since the founding of the Chinese nation did the Mongol tribes succeed in establishing dominion over it, though they had carried on war without cessation along the frontiers during all its ages. So completely destitute of military efficiency had China become that in her struggles against the Manchus and Mongols not a single campaign culminated favorably for her.

Of all the empirical knowledge that the study of this period of Chinese history and the consideration of Socialism gives us, the most important is the bearing the facts have in relation to other nations. Whether or not Socialism had been successful in China, the end would have been the same—the Manchus and Mongols. In fact, the more successful were Socialism the more defenseless would become the nation; the longer it endured, the more complete its destruction. Whenever the banner of the nine yak-tails summoned together the Mongol chieftains, whether by Genghis or some other Khan, whether on the wild banks of the Onon or on the steppes of Gobi, whether in the twelfth or fourteenth century, China was doomed. So long as China was surrounded by militant peoples, her Socialism was destined to bring about the destruction of the nation regardless of its effect within. The fact remains, however, that the Manchus merely completed what the people had begun—the destruction of Socialism in China, and of the empire.